


MOTIVATION & EMOTION

## Unconscious motivation



**Reading:**  
Reeve (2018)  
Ch 16  
(pp. 397–422)

Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Why\\_books\\_are\\_always\\_better\\_than\\_movies.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Why_books_are_always_better_than_movies.jpg)

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## Outline

- Psychodynamic perspective
- The unconscious
- Psychodynamics
- Ego psychology
- Object relations theory
- Criticisms

Based on Reeve (2018, p. 397)

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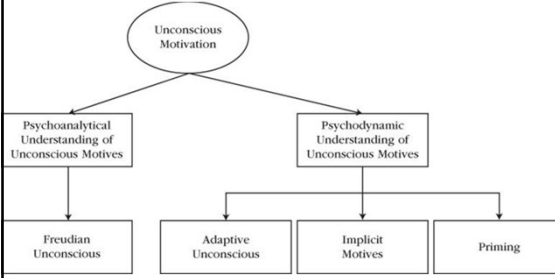
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## Ways of studying unconscious motivation



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graph TD;
  A([Unconscious Motivation]) --> B[Psychoanalytical Understanding of Unconscious Motives];
  A --> C[Psychodynamic Understanding of Unconscious Motives];
  B --> D[Freudian Unconscious];
  C --> E[Adaptive Unconscious];
  C --> F[Implicit Motives];
  C --> G[Priming];
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Based on Reeve (2018, Figure 16.1 p. 399)

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### Psychoanalytic vs. psychodynamic

- **Psychoanalytic:** Freudian approach to psychology, psychotherapy, and the unconscious mind (developed by Freud 1890s–1930s)
- **Psychodynamic:** study of dynamic unconscious mental processes.
- i.e., dynamic unconscious mental processes can be studied without being Freudian.
- This lecture focuses on **psychodynamic** approaches to **unconscious motivation**, but starts with a historical perspective.

Based on Reeve (2018, pp. 399–400)

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Psychodynamic perspective

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### Freud's dual-instinct theory

<div style="background-color: #e0e0e0; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"><b>Eros</b> (life instinct)</div> <p>Instincts for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● survival</li> <li>● nurturance</li> <li>● affiliation</li> <li>● sex / pleasure</li> <li>● creativity</li> <li>● growth</li> </ul>	<div style="background-color: #e0e0e0; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"><b>Thanatos</b> (death drive)</div> <p>Instincts for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● energy conservation</li> <li>● aggression                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ toward self (self-criticism, depression, self-destruction, masochism)</li> <li>○ toward others (anger, prejudice, sadism)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
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Based on Reeve (2018, pp. 400–401) 7

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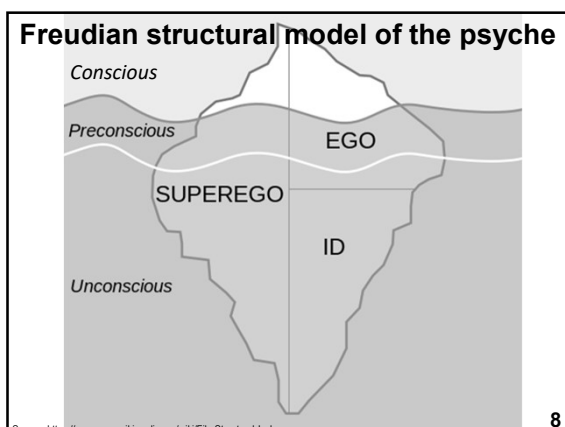
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### Do the Id and the Ego exist?

- Id ~ subcortical brain structures:
  - Amygdala, striatum etc.
  - Unpleasure & pleasure brain centres
- Ego ~ pre-frontal cortex:
  - Choice, decision-making, emotion regulation, self-control etc.
  - Executive control centre that perceives the world and learns to adapt to it
- Interrelated neural pathways and structures:
  - One structure affects another

Based on Reeve (2018, p. 401) 9

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The unconscious

Much of mental life is unconscious

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**Adaptive unconscious**

- Automatic pilot:
  - appraises environment
  - computations and adjustment
  - intuitive/"gut-feel" judgements
  - sets goals
  - initiates actionwhile thinking about something else.
- Helps us to adapt effectively.

Based on Reeve (2018, pp. 404-406)

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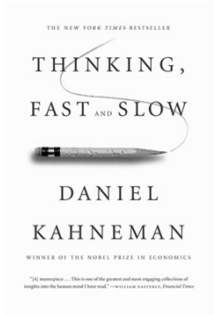
**Mental systems**

**System 1:**  
Automatic unconscious

- Fast, involuntary, effortless, emotional

**System 2:**  
Conscious

- Slow, voluntary, effortful, rational



THE NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

THINKING,  
FAST AND SLOW

DANIEL  
KAHNEMAN

WINNER OF THE NOBEL PRIZE IN ECONOMICS

"Dr. Kahneman... This is one of the greatest and most engaging collections of insights into the human mind I have read." —Michael A. Crichton, *Prentice Hall*

Based on Reeve (2018, Table 16.1, p. 405)

Image source 12

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**Implicit motivation**

- Motives, emotions, attitudes, and judgements that operate outside conscious awareness
- Well-studied implicit motives:
  - achievement
  - power
  - affiliation
  - intimacy
  - autonomy
  - prejudice

Based on Reeve (2018, pp. 406–407) 13

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**Priming**

- Priming (unconsciously or consciously) activates mental representation outside of awareness, preparing a person to behave consistent with that mental representation.
- Consequently, exposure to one stimulus affects response to another stimulus without conscious awareness (e.g., money priming → ↓ helping).

Based on Reeve (2018, pp. 407–408) 14

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**Psychological Priming -  
Bang goes the theory**

YouTube  
(6:14 mins)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HRAKI0GakJM&t=3>



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**How your unconscious mind rules your behaviour**  
YouTube  
(12:51 mins)  
<https://www.youtube.com/embed/vcJm-y7UnLY?start=316&end=1087>



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**Psycho-  
dynamics**

Mental processes operate in parallel and conflict

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**Psychodynamics**

**clashing of psychological forces**

“The mind is an arena, a sort of tumbling-ground for the struggle of antagonistic impulses.”  
Freud (1917)

Based on Reeve (2018, p. 408)

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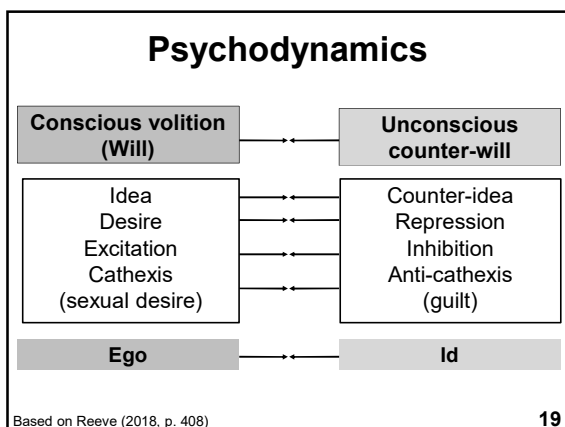
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### Illustration of psychodynamics: Repression

- Central concept of psychodynamics.
- Unconscious is overcrowded with motivations that want to come into the public world.
- **Repression** is the security guard (or gate-keeper) turning down most motivations' requests to enter the public world.
- Repression is the process of forgetting by ways that are unconscious, unintentional, and automatic.
- Repression is Ego's counterforce to the Id's demanding desires.

Based on Reeve (2018, p. 409) 20

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### Illustration of psychodynamics: Suppression

- Thought can't be stopped per se, but it can be suppressed.
- **Suppression** is the conscious, intentional attempt to remove a thought from attention.

But it tends to backfire, especially under high cognitive load, leading to greater occurrence of the unwanted thought because unconscious processes tend to push the thought back into consciousness.

Based on Reeve (2018, pp. 409–411) 21

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### Thought suppression examples

- Food when on a diet
- Memories of lost lover
- Trying to keep a secret
- Not thinking about pink elephant
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Based on Reeve (2018, p. 409)

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### Illustration of psychodynamics: Suppression

- Therefore, it makes more sense, as a suppression strategy, to accept the thought into consciousness.
- e.g., Acceptance and Commitment Therapy

Based on Reeve (2018, pp. 409–411)

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### Terror management theory

- **Mortality salience:** Awareness that one's death is inevitable
- **Death anxiety:** Mortality salience can lead to paralysing anxiety.
- This "terror" needs to be managed to keep the paralysis at bay.
- To cope, people use defenses to think and behave in ways that enhance perceived immortality, such as through:
  - belief in afterlife
  - commitment to a protective cultural worldview

Based on Reeve (2018, pp. 409–411)

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**Ego  
psychology**

Healthy development moves from immature, socially dependence to mature interdependence

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**Ego psychology**

- A school of psychoanalysis based on the Freudian id-ego-superego model
- Id provides instinctual psychic energy. At birth, all energy is Id.
- Ego (personality) develops over time through experimentation and learning about what works in the real world.
- Neo-Freudians studied the motivational dynamics of the “autonomous ego”.

Based on Reeve (2018, p. 412)

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**Ego development**

Healthy ego development involves moving from **heteronomy** (immature, social dependence on others) to **autonomy** (mature, independent).

Based on Reeve (2018, pp. 412–413)

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### Stages of ego development

Ego is a developmental process that moves through stages:

- Symbiotic: Infantile, other provides
- Impulsive: Selfish, weak ego
- Self-protective: Rule-based constraint
- Conformist: Identification with group
- Conscientious: Internalisation of rules
- Individualistic: Complexity in self and others
- Autonomous: Copes with inner conflicts
- Integrated: Wisdom, empathy, conflict tolerance
- Flowing: Merging, playful, acceptance

Based on Reeve (2018, pp. 412-413, which is based on Loevinger, 1976) **28**

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### Motivational importance of ego development

- Ego defence: Ego develops to defend against anxiety (vulnerability)
- Ego offence: Ego develops to empower the person to interact more effectively and more proactively with its surroundings.

Based on Reeve (2018, pp. 413-416) **29**

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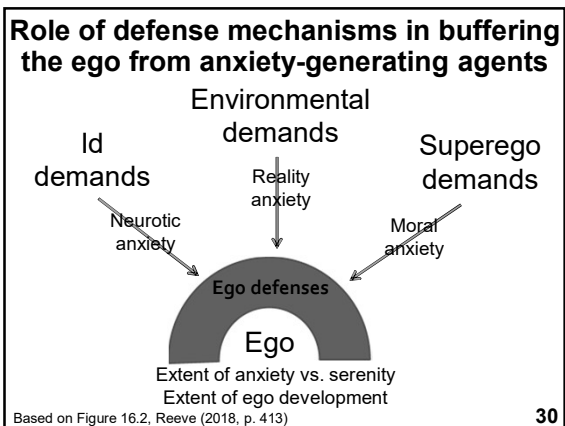
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**Defense mechanism levels of maturity**

- 1. Pathological**  
(psychotic denial, delusional projection)
- 2. Immature**  
(fantasy, projection, passive aggression, acting out)
- 3. Neurotic**  
(intellectualisation, reaction formation, dissociation, displacement, repression)
- 4. Mature**  
(humour, sublimation, suppression, altruism, anticipation)

Based on Reeve (2018, pp. 413–415, which is based on Vaillant, 1977) **31**

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**Mature defense mechanisms**  
→ better life adjustment  
e.g., less depression as a result of life stress

Men living in stressful environments (solid line)  
Men living in nonstressful environments (dashed line)

Depression Vulnerability

high life stress + immature defense mechanisms → vulnerability to depression

Low Maturity Level of Defense Mechanisms High

Based on Figure 16.3, Reeve (2018, p. 415)

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**Object relations theory**

Mental representations of “self” and “other” formed in childhood guide later social motivations and relationships. **33**

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**Object relations theory**

- How people develop their psyche in relation to others (objects).
- Relatedness: People relate to objects (others) to satisfy their emotional and psychological need for relatedness.
- Early experiences of relations with caregivers influence subsequent relations with others.

Based on Reeve (2018, pp. 416–417) **34**

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**Object relations theory**

The quality of one's mental representation of relationships can be characterised by:

- **Unconscious tone:**  
Benevolent vs malevolent
- **Capacity for emotional involvement:**  
Mutual concern vs. selfishness/narcissism
- **Mutuality of autonomy with others:**  
Objects perceived as autonomous present no risk to the integrity of perceiver

Based on Reeve (2018, pp. 416–417) **35**

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**Criticisms**

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**Criticisms of the psychodynamic perspective**

Freudian concepts:

- arose from case studies of disturbed individuals
- many are not scientifically testable
- many aspects wrong
- poor at prediction

Based on Reeve (2018, pp. 419-420)

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**Summary**

■ Ways of studying the unconscious:

- Freudian unconscious
- Adaptive unconscious
- Implicit motives
- Priming

■ Postulates:

- Much of mental life is unconscious
- Unconscious and conscious processes operate in parallel
- Ego development → ego maturity
- Mental representations in childhood → guide adult social motivations

Based on Reeve (2018, pp. 420-421)

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**References**

- Freud, S. (1917). [Original work published 1905]. *Wit and its relation to the unconscious*. <http://www.bartleby.com/279/>
- Reeve, J. (2018). *Understanding motivation and emotion* (7th ed.). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

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